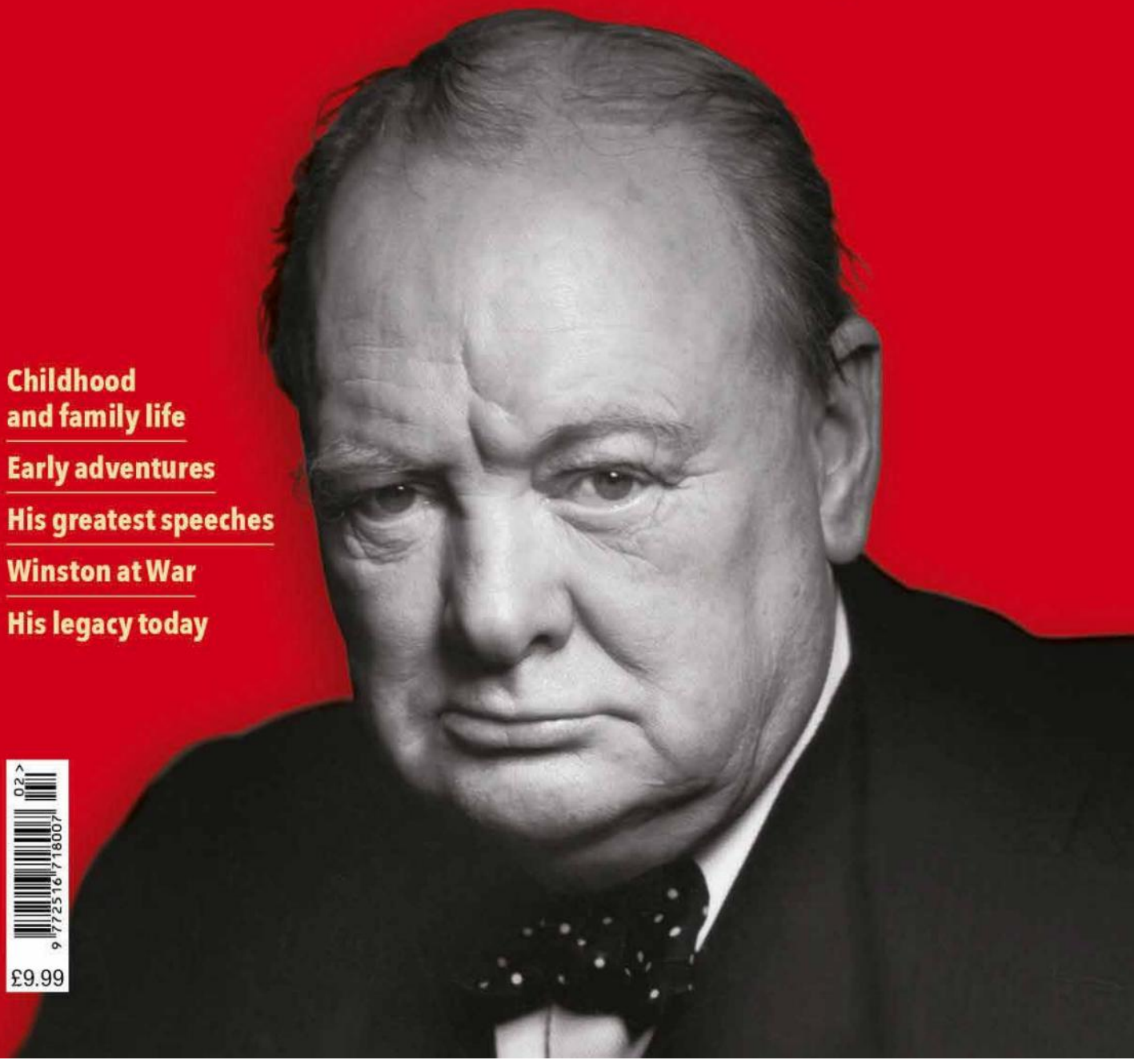
DISCOVER HISTORY

CHURCHILL

A Leader for All Ages



- Childhood and family life
- Early adventures
- His greatest speeches
- Winston at War
- His legacy today

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Becoming Churchill

JOURNALIST AND SOLDIER

Descended from a long line of charismatic politicians, Churchill was destined for a life in parliament. But his drive, fearlessness and boundless ambition saw him take a path into politics full of extraordinary adventure and derring-do

BY JONNY WILKES

RISK TAKER As a young soldier, Churchill saw action in Cuba, India, Sudan and Egypt

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

The results of the Oldham by-election of summer 1899 were in, and Winston Churchill had lost. The 24-year-old Conservative party candidate may have been standing for the first time – and the palace-born aristocrat's chosen constituency was a northern industrial mill town – but he never doubted that this would be the beginning of an illustrious parliamentary career.

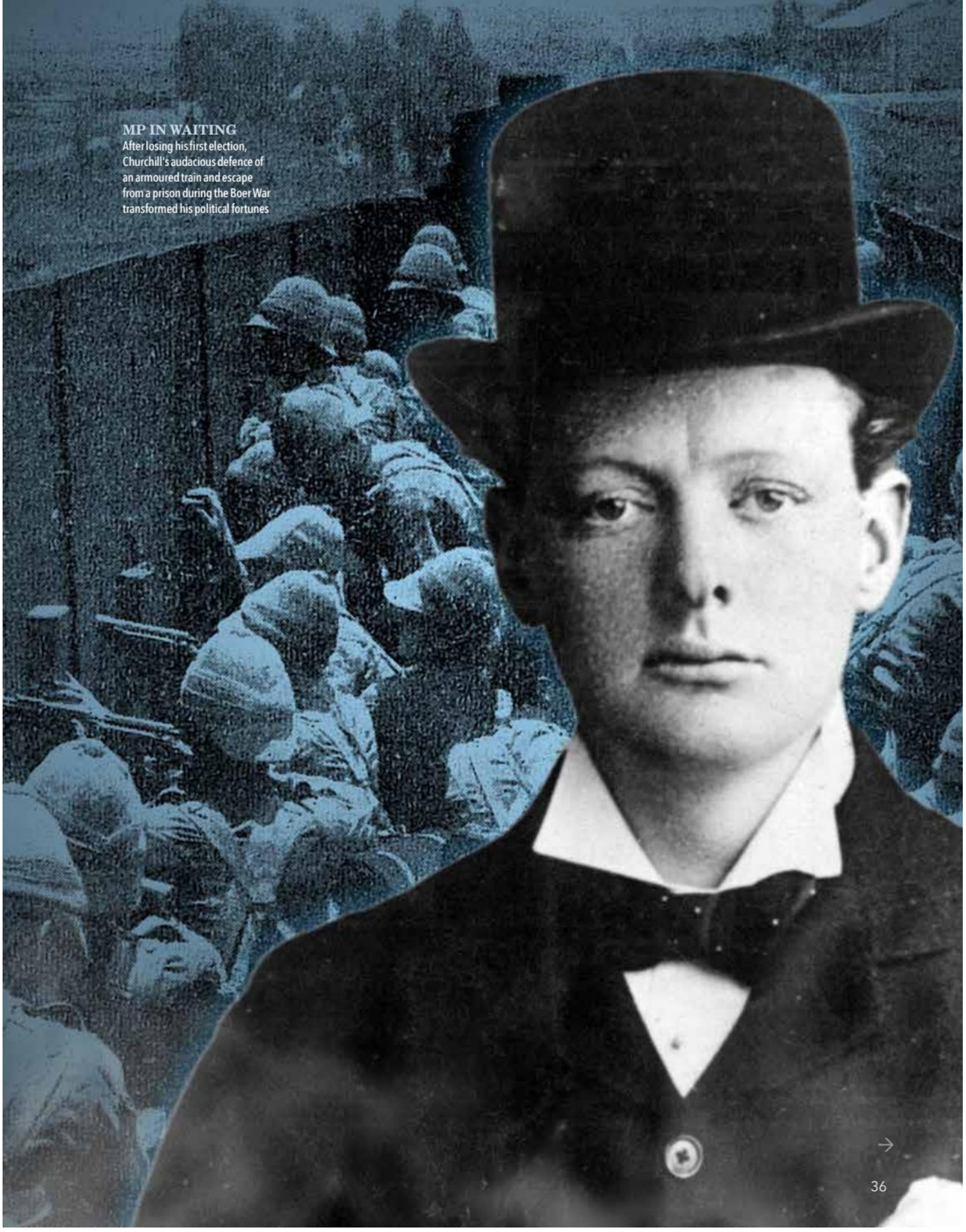
Both his grandfather and his father had served as cabinet ministers and, as a dashing, ambitious, brilliant speaker, Churchill campaigned with the intensity and hubris that would later become emblematic of the man. So to lose, albeit narrowly, was a bitter setback for his political aspirations. Needing to build his reputation further before he could run for office again, he went back to his life as a journalist and soldier.

THIRST FOR ADVENTURE

Across the globe in South Africa, trouble was brewing. Dutch settlers – known as 'Boers' – were becoming increasingly hostile to Britain's imperial influence. Three days after the Boers declared war on Britain in October 1899, Churchill boarded a ship as war correspondent for the *Morning Post*. Such was his eagerness that he shared the voyage with commander-in-chief of the British forces, General Sir Redvers Henry Buller.

Churchill always seemed in a rush with his soldiering career. Since graduating from Sandhurst military academy and joining the 4th Hussars in 1895, he had already seen action in Cuba, India, Sudan and Egypt. He endured the horrors of combat and damning criticisms by fellow officers for being a 'medal hunter' – one reporter had even dubbed him "Pushful the Younger" – all so he could make his name on his way to political office. As he told his mother: "It is a fine game to play – the game of politics – and it is well worth a good hand before really plunging."

To that end, Churchill wrote eloquent reports of his military experiences, the success of which brought wealth and a sought-after reputation among the newspapers. The contract he secured with



MP IN WAITING
After losing his first election, Churchill's audacious defence of an armoured train and escape from a prison during the Boer War transformed his political fortunes

1908: WHIRLWIND ROMANCE
Churchill met future wife Clementine Hozier at a party in 1904 where the usually talkative politician was rendered tongue-tied in her presence. Four years later their paths crossed again and this time Cupid's arrow struck. A few months later, Churchill proposed at Blenheim Palace

Photo Album

HUSBAND AND FATHER

Behind his image as the consummate politician, in his private life Churchill was a doting father of five, with an enviably solid 56-year marriage

BY CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

c1912: FASHIONABLE COUPLE
The 37-year-old MP for Dundee and first lord of the Admiralty relaxes with 'Clemmie' (as he affectionately called her) on the beach at Sandwich in Kent

c1924: AT CHARTWELL
With youngest child Mary, born in September 1922 – the month that Churchill bought his country house, Chartwell. After its total renovation, the family moved in in April 1924

1915: FIRST BORN
The couple's first two children, Diana (left) and Randolph (centre), with a cousin at a society wedding. The Churchills nicknamed their son 'the Chum Bolly' and Diana 'Puppy-Kitten', an amalgam of their private names for each other, 'Pug' (Winston) and 'Clemmy Kat' (Clementine)

1928: MUCKING IN
Churchill enlists his daughters Sarah and Mary to help build a wall at Chartwell in Kent

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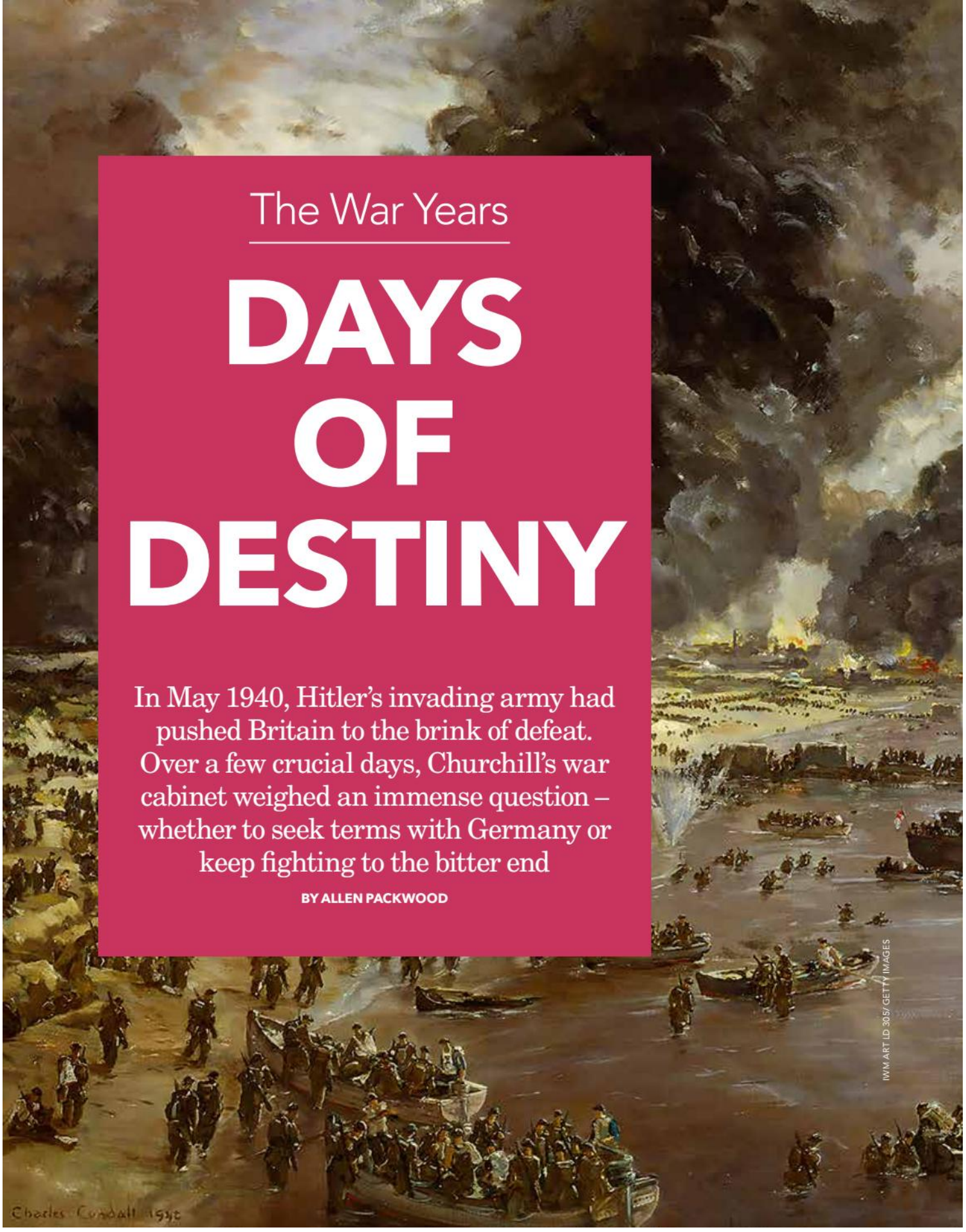

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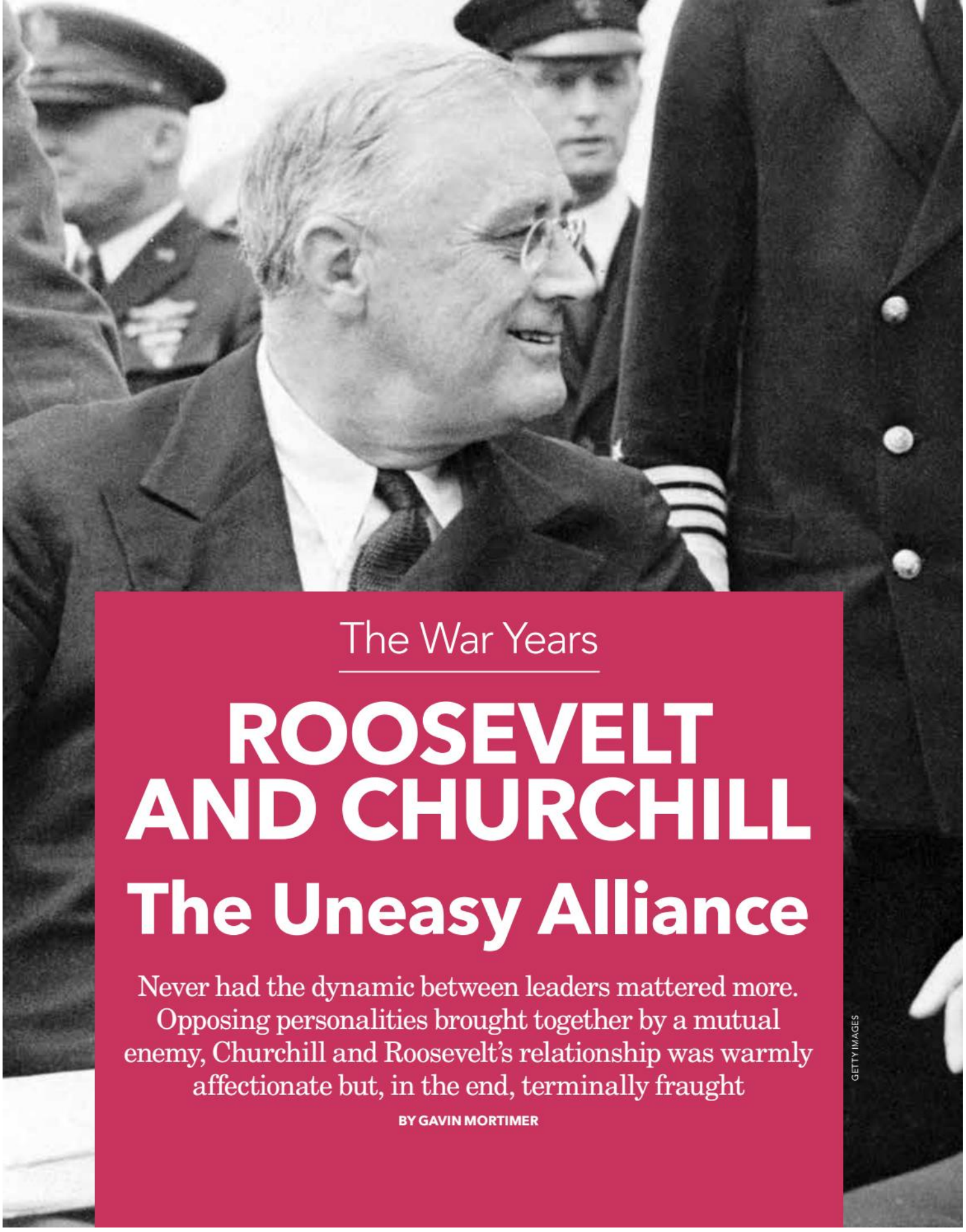
The War Years

DAYS OF DESTINY

In May 1940, Hitler's invading army had pushed Britain to the brink of defeat. Over a few crucial days, Churchill's war cabinet weighed an immense question – whether to seek terms with Germany or keep fighting to the bitter end

BY ALLEN PACKWOOD

UP FOR THE FIGHT
Churchill makes a stirring speech in April 1940. Within weeks he was prime minister and – as besieged British forces fled Dunkirk (background image), faced the bleak prospect of Britain's destruction



The War Years

ROOSEVELT AND CHURCHILL

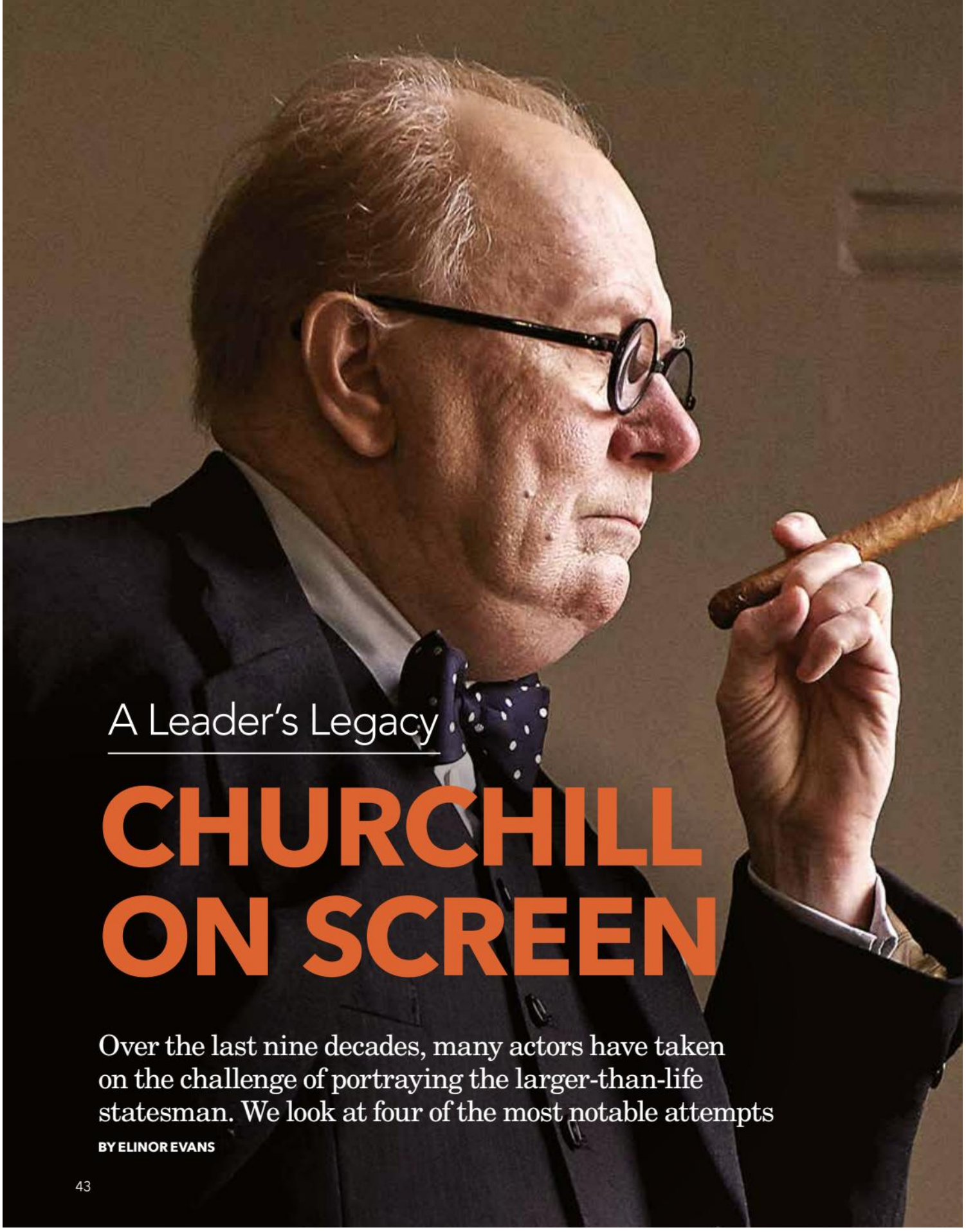
The Uneasy Alliance

Never had the dynamic between leaders mattered more. Opposing personalities brought together by a mutual enemy, Churchill and Roosevelt's relationship was warmly affectionate but, in the end, terminally fraught

BY GAVIN MORTIMER

GETTY IMAGES

ODD COUPLE
Politically worlds apart, Churchill and Roosevelt (pictured here in August 1941) nonetheless forged a strong alliance and friendship. But eventually the cracks began to show



A Leader's Legacy

CHURCHILL ON SCREEN

Over the last nine decades, many actors have taken on the challenge of portraying the larger-than-life statesman. We look at four of the most notable attempts

BY ELINOR EVANS

In an early scene of the 2017 blockbuster *Darkest Hour* (pictured), Gary Oldman's Churchill turns to a wall covered in assorted hats, from his customary bowlers to top hats and military caps, and wonders: "Which self should I be today?"

It's a question that's been addressed by more than 200 films, television programmes and plays over the last nine decades: which aspect of Churchill's character and actions to explore next?

The first film to portray Churchill did so before he even became prime minister: *Royal Cavalcade* (1935), a docudrama about the reign of George V in which the politician was played by CM Hallard. Since then, episodes from Churchill's life have been reimagined by every generation, from his time as a youthful officer and war correspondent during the Boer War in *Young Winston* (1972) to his ageing and ill health in *The Crown* (2016). Audiences have even been introduced to Winston in the nude, when Albert Finney stripped off for his award-winning performance in *The Gathering Storm* (2002).

Taking on a figure of such legendary status is a unique – and intimidating – challenge. Irish actor Brendan Gleeson, who won an Emmy for 2009's *Into the Storm*, revealed that he "had to get the idea of him as a hero out of my head". Robert Hardy, who went on to portray the statesman no less than nine times, also balked initially at playing him: "I thought it an absurd and inappropriate idea… I grew up listening to Churchill." Even Gary Oldman refused the role until he was sure that prosthetics could achieve the physical transformation needed to emulate the iconic leader. As it turned out, he needn't have worried – playing Winston won him an Academy Award.

SHUTTERSTOCK/ ALEX BAILEY–NETFLIX

The Crown focuses on the leader's relationship with Britain's new queen

The Crown (2016)

An American as the ageing Winston

One of the most popular recent portrayals of the great Briton has been by an American: seasoned film and theatre actor John Lithgow, in the award-winning Netflix drama *The Crown*. Given that the drama centres on the royal family, it's not surprising that there's much focus on Churchill's relationship with the royals: first King George VI, and then Queen Elizabeth II. The almost 52-year age difference between the Queen (played by Claire Foy) and Churchill makes for a fascinating on-screen dynamic, as the 'father of the nation' attempts to balance his many years of experience with deference to the much younger monarch.

The Churchill we meet in *The Crown* is beyond the years of his wartime glory, out of power (for now) and in his seventies. Yet when he is introduced in the first episode, he still stage-manages every occasion, timing his arrival at Princess Elizabeth's wedding to the Duke of Edinburgh in 1947 so that he is the final guest to arrive. As he enters with wife Clementine (Harriet Walter) and processes solemnly up the aisle to the strains of the patriotic hymn, 'I Vow to Thee, My Country', the guests rise to their feet.

An amused Anthony Eden and Lord Salisbury look on, with the latter asking: "Has Winston no shame? It's a royal wedding, not a campaign trail."

"He's outrageous," adds Eden. "But you have to admire him."

Some have remarked on Lithgow's height being a distracting factor that prevents a true portrayal: though the actor stoops to play Churchill, at 6ft 4ins he is often still taller than those around him. For the real Churchill, standing at around 5ft 6ins, this would have been a much rarer experience.

However, Lithgow brings both wit and gravitas to the role, tinged with slight fatigue. When Churchill is re-elected in 1951 at the age of 76, the drama contrasts his political glory with his failing health, showing Churchill's 1953 stroke. While in reality Churchill *did* suffer a stroke in 1953, it's not thought that he hid this from the Queen in order to continue with his duties, as writer Peter Morgan suggests.

→

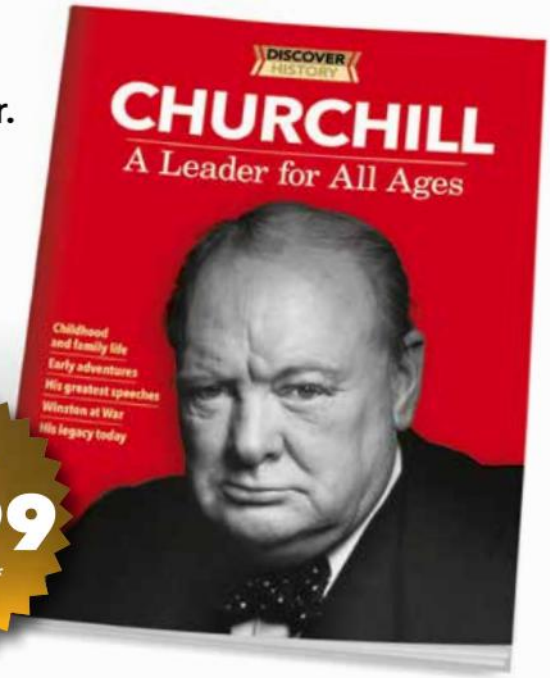
DISCOVER HISTORY

CHURCHILL

A Leader for All Ages

This unique and comprehensive special edition explores the dramatic life of Britain's iconic Second World War leader. It features:

- The prime minister's most rousing speeches
- Roosevelt and Churchill – a crucial Anglo-US alliance
- Winston's WWI disaster
- His greatest military challenges
- D-Day and the battle to free Europe
- The places that shaped his life



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